Misc

A BRIEF

FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE, D.D.,
PASTOR OF THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
NEW YORK CITY.

Price - - 5 Cents.

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Women's Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church,
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METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

ST. MATT. xxviii: 19, 20. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

HERE is the first command of the risen Christ to His disciples. It is the divine act of incorporation, the charter and commission of the Christian Church. Three facts are written upon the very face of this charter, and no reasonable man can deny them.

1. The Church of Jesus Christ is a missionary enterprise. It is not intended to stand still, but to "go." It is not intended to be self-contained, but to "make disciples" and "baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." It is not intended to be silent, but to "teach" the things that Christ has commanded. This is the very essence of Christianity, that it is an advancing, radiating, conquering religion. It is born to grow. It lives to spread. It is a centrifugal force, which works from the centre toward the circumference. The Church is organized to conserve, increase, direct and apply that force.

It is the body in which the Spirit of Christ is to live and work. The Spirit of Christ is Missions. When that Spirit wanes the Church is sick ; when that Spirit dies the Church is a corpse.

2. The missionary enterprise of the Church has no national or geographical limits. It has a method which may be called the method of radiation. Beginning at Jerusalem, it is to spread outward through Judea and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. The circles are concentric, but not coterminous. There is no fixed distance at which they are to stop. There is no line where the Gospel must halt and turn back upon itself, and say, "Thus far can I go and no farther." Above all there is no wall or barrier to divide Home Missions from Foreign Missions. To separate these two things from each other is to divide them both from Christ. For he never saw or acknowledged any such division. He called disciples in order that they might call other disciples. He chose nations in order that they might be messengers to other nations. He gave Christianity a home in the world in order that it might make the world its home. The sole boundary of the religion of Jesus is the ring of the round earth.

3. There is no limit of time in the commission which Christ gives to His Church. He does not tell His disciples that they are to preach and teach for

one century, for five centuries, for twenty centuries, and then pause, to wait for the restoration of the Kingdom. On the contrary, He says that it is not for them "to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." The one thing for them to do is to go, and keep on going; to preach, and keep on preaching; for if they do this He will be with them even unto the end of the world. The commission is universal and perpetual. The "limit of space" is the globe itself. The "limit of time" is all the time there is. Until the end of the world is reached the commission runs: "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations."

Now I submit to you that this is a fair, honest and reasonable interpretation of the charter which Jesus Christ gave to His Church. These three facts are clear: He intended it to be a missionary enterprise, for the whole world, and to the end of time. But in the face of these facts there are some people who say, "we believe in Christianity, but we do not believe in Foreign Missions;" and there are a good many more people who say, "we are Christians, but we have no particular interest in Foreign Missions;" and there is a vast number of people who say nothing at all about it, but give conclusive evidence of a lack of faith by a large and unmistakable absence of works. There may be some of these people in this congregation; and if so I am

heartily glad of it, and can assure them that they are most welcome. Everybody is welcome here, whatever his opinions be on any subject; and I should be especially glad this morning to have an opportunity of speaking to some who may be indifferent or even in opposition, provided they are willing to listen, with candid minds, to a plain and straightforward statement of the facts. It may be possible to remove their difficulties and induce them to reconsider their position. It may be possible to say something to confirm and increase the interest of those who are already favorably inclined toward the subject. It may be possible to fortify the faith of those who believe in the cause but are sometimes disturbed by the arguments which are urged against it. At all events, I hold a Brief for Foreign Missions to-day, and I propose to plead that cause in the presence of this honorable assembly.

You will observe at the outset that the cause occupies the position, not of the prosecution, but of the defense. The command of Christ and the original charter of the Church are in its favor. As long as these stand unassailed and uncontroverted the cause is justified. The burden of proof rests on the other side. All that we have to do is to answer the objections, and if that can be done the case is ours. And this is what I propose to do

this morning—*to meet fairly and squarely all the arguments against Foreign Missions, and show you, not merely that they are too weak to stand against the command of Christ, but that every one of them really enforces and intensifies that command, and is in fact an argument for Foreign Missions. I want to turn the enemies' guns and "carry the war into Africa."*

Let us take the common objections in order.

1. "There are so many heathen at home that it is foolish to waste the strength of the Church in trying to preach to the heathen abroad."

I admit the premise at once, but I deny the conclusion absolutely; for, in order to establish it, it would be necessary to show that the way to convert the heathen at home is to neglect the heathen abroad. But the facts are all the other way; and if the history of the Church proves anything, it proves that she has always done her best for those who are nearest to her when she has been doing most for those who are far away from her.

There are heathen at home; and we ought never to forget or neglect them. But how many are they? Do you suppose there are 10,000,000 in this country who do not know about Christianity? Are there 40,000,000 whom you would venture to call heathen? There cannot be more than that,

for all the rest are in connection with Christian Churches. But in the world outside there are a thousand million heathen. In China 300,000,000, in India 250,000,000, a vast black wilderness of heathendom, in which the lost and wretched myriads of human beings are wandering without a ray of light. Every one of them needs Christ just as much as you and I need Him. What an immense, what an incalculable claim has this unhappy and benighted world on us to whom God has given the Gospel!

Moreover the vast majority of these fellow-creatures are heathen by necessity; they have never heard the Gospel. But in our own land the greater numbers are heathen by choice; they have heard the religion of Christ, but do not accept it. This is no reason why we shall give up trying to win them; but I ask you honestly whether one of the very reasons which makes it hard to do this is the fact that the Christian Church seems so indifferent, so careless of the fate of the great world? Nothing could make Christianity more potent at home than to see it really anxious and eager and devoted to help and bless and save all men everywhere. The very effort to fulfil Christ's command and preach the Gospel to every creature, would be the strongest, noblest proof of the reality and beauty of his religion. Darkness is the same wherever it exists;

it is all one kingdom ; and the darkness that still lingers in our own land will never be conquered and expelled until the Church of Christ really girds herself and goes forth to vanquish the mighty strongholds of night and death throughout the world. Then her light will shine, and the gleam that is strong enough to pierce the shadows in the distance will irradiate the gloom that gathers at her feet. More light is what the world wants. And do you think that it will make less light to kindle a greater fire? Do you suppose that one more Christian in China will make one less Christian in America? Do you imagine that one less effort to preach the Gospel in Africa will mean one more effort to preach the Gospel in America? Do you suppose that one dollar that is given for Foreign Missions will be taken from Home Missions? I tell you, no! It will be taken from self-indulgence, from avarice, from worldly luxury. Peter is not robbed when Paul is supported. Demas the worldling, Simon Magus the astrologer, and Demetrius the idol maker, are the only ones that suffer. Peter and Paul grow strong together, and the farther one goes abroad the better the other works at home. In 1812 the Senate of Massachusetts objected to the incorporation of the American Board of Foreign Missions, on the ground that "the country had no religion to spare." If that objection had prevailed

I believe by this time *the country would have had no religion to keep.*

I ask you to say honestly whether you think that the effort to send the Gospel to the heathen has hindered the evangelizing of our own land in one solitary instance. I ask you to say whether the Church at home has not become more earnest, more devoted, more generous, more aggressive, more useful, just because, and in as far as, she has begun to try to do something for the whole race of man. I ask you to say whether you would not care more, and do more, for the success of the Gospel here, if you cared more and did more for its success everywhere.

The fact that there are heathen at home is, then, an argument why we should do our best to preach Christ to the heathen everywhere. That will be consistent. And a consistent Christianity is the only kind that can convince men and convert them.

2. "Foreign Missions are not wisely conducted; the missionaries are not well chosen; they live too luxuriously; the work is extravagantly done; it costs $5 to send $10 to the heathen."

To this objection, which probably includes more hasty and ignorant statements than any argument which the mind of man has ever devised, I interpose a general and particular denial, and appeal

to fact against prejudice. It would take too long to make a complete exhibition of the errors which are here confidently asserted, and which have been so often refuted that the only wonder is that any one should be foolish enough to repeat them, or credulous enough to believe them.

It does not take $5 to send $10 to the heathen, nor $2, nor $1. As a matter of fact, it takes less than sixty cents. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions last year collected, handled and disbursed $907,000 at a cost of $48,000 for administration. That is a little more than 5 per cent. Do you know of any business that is more cheaply conducted?

The missionaries do not live luxuriously. They live laboriously and simply and honestly. Our church supports 1880 of them, American and native, at an average expense of less than $500 a year apiece for them and all their work. You cannot have much luxury on $500 a year. These missionaries spend less in a year for their whole living than some of you spend for your opera and theatre tickets.

And where do the reports of their luxury come from? From travelers whom the missionaries have fed at their tables and sheltered in their houses, and who come away to reproach their hosts with extravagance. People who are willing

to offend against the first law of hospitality, are not likely to have a very strict regard for the laws of testimony. You had better take their report with a grain of salt. Besides, suppose some of the missionaries do live well. Are they not entitled to do so? When you send an agent into a foreign country you do not want him to appear as a beggar. When you have heavy work for your horse you do not begin by cutting down his oats. I know of a Presbyterian missionary in China who walked 1200 miles in seven months and preached three times a day; and his traveling expenses were less than $100; and if you think that is luxury, I wish you had more of it.

As to the quality of the men, I should be perfectly willing to match them against any other set of men engaged in the service of any other enterprise in the world. Look at Africa. Let Stanley and his front column, and his rear column, defile before you. These are the ambassadors of commerce! And then let the missionaries appear, Livingston, and Hannington, and Mackay, and Bushnell, and Lindley, and Mackenzie, and all that noble company. These are the ambassadors of the Cross! Which think you is the finer army in the sight of the world?

I will tell you what the British East India Company said, eighty-five years ago: "The sending of

Christian missionaries into our Eastern Possessions is the maddest, most expensive, most unwarranted project that was ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast." I will tell you what the English Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal said, a few months since: "In my judgment Christian missionaries have done more lasting good to the people of India than all other agencies combined." And I will tell you that the agency which has justified its existence, done its work, and won the approval of its bitterest opponents, after that fashion, cannot possibly be foolish, feeble, extravagant or dishonest. You cannot find any other human enterprise of the 19th Century which has been as wisely, as prudently, as economically, as honorably conducted as this work of Christian missions.

3. "The sending out of missionaries by the different denominations perpetuates the divisions among Christians which ought to be removed; for the great thing to be desired is the unity of the Church."

I admit the conclusion, but I deny the premises. The unity of the church is one of the very strongest arguments for Foreign Missions; for the only line along which that unity can be reached is the line of co-operation in the work of Christ; and the best field in the world for co-operation is the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen.

There, if anywhere, standing face to face with the black, sweltering mass of paganism and idolatry, the disciples of Jesus can feel that they are one. "In a country where people pray to cows the differences that divide Christians seem of small account." The missionaries do not go out to preach Methodism or Congregationalism or Presbyterianism; even if they wanted to do it, they would find it impossible; they have to preach Christ, in the plainest words, in the simplest way; for that is the only preaching that will do any good. All that remains of denominationalism is an organization behind them to supply the money and the men for the common work. Regiments from different States fight for the same flag. At home there may be little rivalries; in the field the only rivalry is to do the best service. You are bound to support your organization well, not only for its own credit, but because it is the link which binds you to the common cause. There is no way in which you can do more to advance the real and living unity of the Christian Church than by giving through the nearest channel to the work of Foreign Missions. For it is in that work that Christ is most simply preached, and from that work to-day the brightest beams of dawn are rising to presage the reunion of Christendom. I know of nothing more beautiful in the history of the modern church

than the union of the converts of different missions into one "Church of Christ in Japan," with a creed so short that it can be printed on a single page, and so simple that I would to God our own Church had one like it. The hope of the unity of the Church in the simplicity of the faith, is an argument, not against, but for, Foreign Missions.

4. "The work of Foreign Missions does not pay; it is not a success."

This is a very curious kind of an argument; one needs a double-barreled gun, to shoot in two directions, in order to bring it down.

If it means that the work of missions is not yet completely successful, the assertion must be frankly admitted. But this does not prove that the work should be abandoned; on the contrary, it proves that it should be continued and enlarged. The existence of disease is not an argument against the practice of medicine; it is an argument in its favor. The fact that heathenism is not yet conquered and extirpated is the very reason why we should keep on with the work of missions, and put into it an infinitely larger force of men, of money, of prayer, of effort, than we have ever done yet.

But if this objection means that the results of Foreign Missions are not enough to encourage us to go on with them, then I deny the assertion flatly, and appeal again to the facts. There is no enter-

prise among men which can show a better record, in comparison with the means used and the difficulties met, than the missionary enterprise.

What do you call success? Is it a success to have opened new continents to commerce and brought civilization to new nations? Then missions have succeeded, for they have led the way into Africa and Australia and Asia; they have changed the South Sea Islands from the terror of navigators into peaceful centres of trade; they have won the confidence of strange and hostile races, and paved the way for the interchange of commodities and the entrance of civilizing influences. I do not say that commerce has always made the best use of these opportunities. For too often, the very men who have fought and opposed the missionary at home, have meanly crawled behind him abroad, to gather an infamous profit from the trade in drunkenness and death along the paths which they would not have dared to open. But that is their fault, their sin, their shame. The man who makes a road is a benefactor; the man who uses it to carry poison to his fellowmen is a miscreant. But for all that, roadmaking is an honorable and useful work. And I say that missionaries have done more to make safe highways through the world than any other set of men. And to-day, clean commerce, honest commerce, legiti-

mate commerce gets more returns from missions in a year than all the money that the Church has ever put into them.

What do you call success? Is it a success to make vast contributions to human science and literature? Then missions have succeeded, for the "Prince of Geographers," Carl Ritter, says that without them his books could not have been written; Max Muller, says, that their contributions to philology and history are invaluable and indispensable; there is not one of the departments of botany or zoology or meteorology which they have not enriched; the knowledge of the languages of the earth has been more advanced by the effort to render the Bible into every tongue than by all other causes put together.

What do you call success? Is it a success to adorn the page of history with glorious examples of faith and courage and self-sacrifice? Then missions have succeded; for there is no roll of honor that shines with brighter names than the list of men and women who have given their lives to bring the heathen to Christ, and won the martyr's crown in Burmese prisons and Indian massacres, among the snow-clad mountains of Thibet and the burning sands of Arabia, on the cliffs of Madagascar and beside the rivers of China, on the shining sands of South Sea Islands and beneath the black shadow

of African forests. Manhood seems crowned, ennobled, glorified when we look at the heroism of Christian missionaries. And I dare you to put our easy, selfish, inglorious lives beside these names which shall live forever, and then say that they have *failed* and we have *succeeded.*

What do you call success? Is it a success to win souls for Christ out of the very heart of heathendom, and plant real and living churches in the ancient abode of darkness and death? Then missions have succeeded. Let me tell you just what our own missionary enterprise has accomplished. Twenty years ago we had three thousand heathen converts. To-day we have thirty thousand; tenfold increase; while the Church at home has not even doubled. In ten years our churches in Syria and Brazil have grown three hundred per cent.; in Siam five hundred per cent.; in Japan seven hundred per cent. At home our churches have grown less than fifty per cent. We have ninety churches in Mexico, and twenty-four in Africa, and twelve in Siam, and forty-five in China, and thirty-four in Japan, and twenty in Syria, and twenty-seven in Persia. We have nearly thirty thousand pupils in our schools. And last year alone 2,753 persons stood up, in the face of dangers and difficulties which you cannot even begin to imagine, and confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Now I say nothing of the broader work of missions, which cannot be tabulated—the work of spreading the general principles of Christianity among new peoples, the work of education, the work of letting in the light upon the darkness of idolatry and preparing the way for the coming of the Kingdom. But taking the net results as they can be counted, I say they are wonderful and hopeful. And when you, my brother, have found one hardened sinner at home, and turned him from error, and brought him into the Church of Christ, against the opposition of his friends and family, and at the sacrifice of all his worldly prospects—then, and not till then, will you have a right to find fault with the missionary enterprise which has done that thing for thousands of heathen while you have been sitting still and finding fault.

5. "Foreign peoples have their own civilizations and religions, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves about them."

Yes, they have; but that is the very reason why we must "trouble ourselves about them." Their civilizations are systems of degradation, of oppression, of cruelty, under which women groan, and children perish, and men live like beasts. Their religions are either sad and gloomy superstitions, or rituals of blood and shame. Think of the religions of Africa which teach men to slay and

devour one another; the religions of Japan and India with their licentious rites and brutal adorations. Think of the civilization of China. Let your fancy picture those nightly processions through the streets of Chinese cities, long files of young blind girls decked with garlands for the sacrifice of lust; friendless, helpless, homeless; marching each with her hands upon the shoulders of the one before her, groping her way through an endless midnight to sin and shame and suffering and death. Tell me, is that kind of civilization a reason why you should not "trouble yourself about the heathen?"

What have Confucius and Buddha done for these captives, victims, sufferers? What do they propose to do? Nothing. The only thing that can help them is the Gospel of Jesus Chist. And because He has given it to you, you owe it to them. It is a debt from which you cannot escape, save at the sacrifice of the instincts of your humanity and the promises of your religion. If you have no pity for others, what right have you to expect that God will have pity for you?

Well then, how shall this debt be paid? What shall we do to preach the Gospel to every creature?

There are three ways in which we may help the cause.

1. *We may help by personal consecration of the heart and life to this service.*—That is the noblest way;

the way of highest honor and most costly sacrifice. Would God that some of you in this church, young men and young women to whom the Master has given so much, might feel the mighty desire of love to preach the Gospel, and to say to the Lord, "here am I, send me." That would be a crown of glory on your life.

2. *The next way to help the cause is to give your money to it.*—If you cannot go into the field yourself, you ought to have a substitute. How easy it would be for some of you to say: "I will have my own missionary, my own messenger of Christ to the heathen," and to give the pledge for five hundred dollars, which would fill another place in the front ranks of the battle, and keep another voice testifying to the love of Jesus in the dark places. I do not say you would not miss the money. You would miss it; and that is the reason why you ought to give it. You have found little joy or comfort in giving to missions hitherto, just because you have not given enough to feel it. Try the other plan. If you gave five dollars last year, give ten this year. If it was fifty dollars, take the pen and write quickly one hundred. Make a sacrifice. Deny yourself something. And then you will begin to feel that your religion is real, and that you have a share in witnessing for Christ to the ends of the earth. Our missionary enterprise is staggering

and halting to-day, because the Church does not support it. Men and women are waiting to go, but they cannot go, because you will not send them. *Bear a hand in the work*—not a little finger, but *a whole hand*—and give to missions in such a way that you will know that you have given, and the heathen will know it, and your Master will know it and reward you for it.

3. *The last way to help the cause of missions and the greatest is to pray for it.*—But I do not think we have any right to use that way until we have first followed one of the others. Therefore let us all make our offerings in the name of Jesus Christ for the preaching of His Gospel among the heathen.

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